



Spotlight on Global Jihad (June 9 - 15, 2016)



Main events of the week

- This week as well, **attacks continued on ISIS's strongholds in Syria, Iraq and Libya, so far with no significant changes on the ground:** the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) are tightening the siege on **the city of Manbij**; the Syrian Army continues to advance towards **the city of Tabqa**, west of Al-Raqqah; Iraqi Army forces are fighting in **the southern neighborhoods of Fallujah**; the forces of the Libyan Government of National Accord are tightening the siege on **the city of Sirte** and, according to some reports, are already fighting in its suburbs.
- **In the US**, a mass-murder terrorist attack was carried out, the most serious attack in its history (49 dead). The attack was carried out by an American citizen from an Afghan family, **who was apparently inspired by ISIS**; **In France**, a senior police officer and his partner were murdered in their home by a **radical Islamic operative from a Moroccan family, who was also inspired by ISIS**. In recent months, ISIS has called on its supporters in the West, including the United States and France, to carry out attacks against civilians and government officials. The attacks in the US and France illustrate that **ISIS's calls are falling on attentive ears among citizens with a radical Muslim worldview who live in Western countries.**

Attacks inspired by ISIS in the United States and France

Mass-casualty attack in Orlando, USA

- **On June 12, 2016, a mass-casualty attack was carried out at the Pulse night club of the gay community in Orlando, Florida.** A total of 49 people were killed and a few dozen others were wounded. At around 02:00, a terrorist armed with an assault rifle, pistol and explosives broke into the club. A shootout ensued between him and the security guard, after which the terrorist managed to enter the club. The terrorist barricaded himself in the club and took hostages. After he had spent around three

hours at the club, police rescued about 30 hostages from the club and shot the terrorist dead.

■ The terrorist who carried out the attack was **Omar Seddique Mateen**, 29, a US citizen born in New York to an Afghan family. Omar Mateen had no criminal record, had received weapons training, and had a licensed weapon. According to the FBI, which is investigating the incident, **Omar Mateen was questioned by the FBI in 2013 and 2014 after expressing sympathy for radical Islamic elements**. However, the investigation against him did not yield any conclusive evidence linking him to terrorist activity.

■ Therefore, he was released at the time and the investigation was terminated. According to the head of the FBI, so far the agency has no indication that the terrorist was part of a network and he apparently acted alone. Shortly before the attack, Omar Mateen called 911 and pledged allegiance to ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi.

■ **President Obama noted that that was the deadliest shooting incident in US history**. He expressed sorrow and solidarity with the families of the victims. According to President Obama, although the investigation is in its initial stages, at this point we can say that it was a terrorist act and a hate crime. According to the President, investigators do not yet know the exact motivation of the killer. In any case, the FBI is treating the incident as a terrorist act (Sky News, June 12, 2016).

■ A few hours after the attack, the Aamaq News Agency, the propaganda arm of the Islamic State, issued a statement saying that the attack had been carried out by an ISIS fighter. In a video subsequently released by ISIS (June 13, 2016), the Islamic State congratulates Omar Mateen and commends his actions: “he charged deep into the American Crusaders, responded in kind, and spilled their blood [...] Thanks to him, Allah has brought relief to the hearts of jihadi fighters everywhere [...]” In the ITIC’s assessment, these reports **do not constitute proof that the perpetrator was an ISIS operative and that the attack was planned or directed by ISIS**. It is likely that the terrorist, like other terrorists of his kind, **was inspired by ISIS and influenced by its calls to carry out attacks in the United States and Western Europe**.

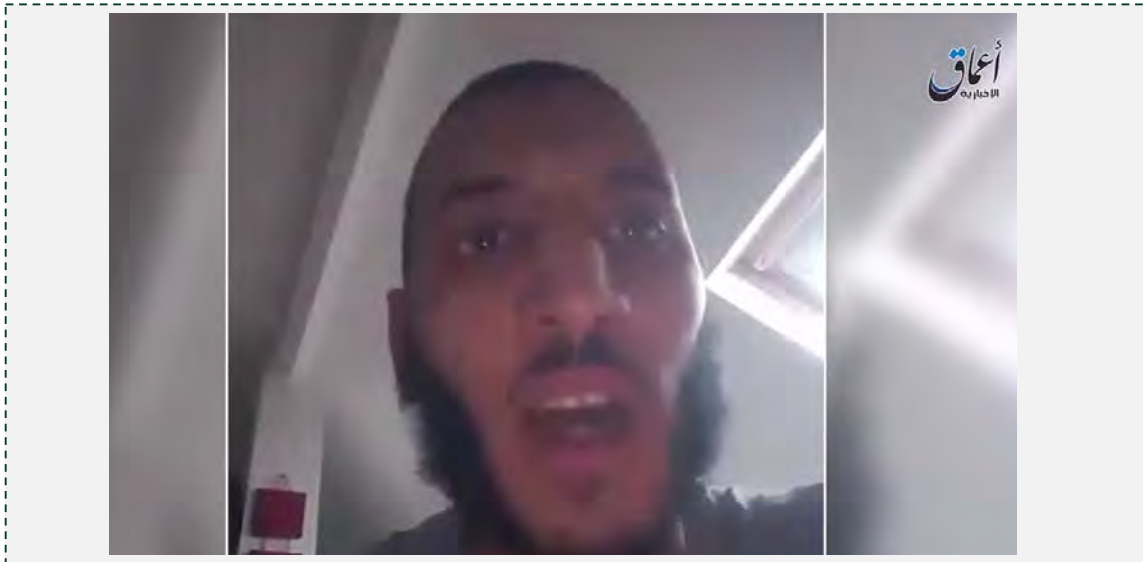


Right: Omar Seddiq Mateen, perpetrator of the attack at the gay community's club in Orlando, Florida (Haqq, June 12, 2016). Left: ISIS announcement from June 12, 2016, stating that a fighter from the Islamic State carried out the attack in Orlando (Haqq, 13 June 2016).

The murder of a French police officer and his partner

- A radical Islamic operative who, in the ITIC's assessment, was inspired by ISIS, stabbed a French police officer and his partner to death (on the night of June 13, 2016). The attack occurred in the suburb of Magnanville, located about 50 km from Paris. The terrorist ambushed the officer (deputy commander of a police station in the area) when he returned from work and stabbed him several times. He then abducted his partner and his son and held them hostage. After unsuccessful negotiations, police commandos broke into the house and killed the terrorist. The officer's partner was also killed and their three-year-old son was rescued.
- According to French media reports, the terrorist was **Larossi Abballa**, 25, from Morocco. In 2013, he was sentenced to three years in prison for membership in a network of terrorist operatives that helped jihad fighters reach Pakistan and Afghanistan. According to the Paris public prosecutor, the investigators working on the incident found a list in the terrorist's possession of people that he planned to kill.
- **Larossi Abballa photographed the entire attack and posted it in real time on his Facebook page. In a post on his page, the terrorist declares his loyalty to the Islamic State, calling to kill police officers, prison guards, journalists, and rappers.** In his post, he notes that he responded to the calls of ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi to kill "infidels" in their homes with their families. He also threatens that "the Euro tournament would become a graveyard" (Israeli daily Yediot Aharonot, June 15, 2016).

■ ISIS’s media foundation (Aamaq) released the video taken by Larossi Abballa on his cellphone. **The video shows the terrorist pledging allegiance to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi and quoting Islamic traditions in praise of jihad. He calls on the Islamic nation to “fight the tyrants” and calls on Muslim prisoners in France to wait patiently** (Aamaq, June 14, 2016). He speaks in French but also includes Arabic phrases.



Larossi Abballa in the video, pledging allegiance to ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. He apparently photographed himself on his cellphone (Aamaq, June 14, 2016).

■ It is not yet clear whether the terrorist had partners and what was his relationship with ISIS. In the ITIC’s assessment, this was another attack **inspired by ISIS which, in recent months, has repeatedly called on its supporters to carry out attacks in France** (and in Western countries). Identification with ISIS and with its threats to attack French (and Western) targets is clearly evident in the terrorist’s post. **The security forces and journalists** mentioned in the post are **groups that are “in the crosshairs” of jihadists inspired by ISIS to carry out attacks in France (and other Western countries).**

The US-led campaign against ISIS

Airstrikes

■ This week, the US-led coalition carried out intensive airstrikes in Syria. **Most of the airstrikes were carried out in the area of Manbij, as support for the SDF who are attacking the city. In Iraq, the attacks were concentrated in the area of Fallujah,** where the attempt to take over the city from ISIS continued. **US Defense Secretary Ashton Carter** confirmed that for the first time, Apache helicopters were also used in

airstrikes in Iraq. According to Carter, the helicopters attacked ISIS targets **around the city of Mosul**. The participation of American attack helicopters marks an increase in US involvement in the fighting in Iraq (USA Today, June 13, 2016).

Russia's involvement in the fighting

■ Speaking at a weekly briefing, **Russian Foreign Ministry Spokeswoman Maria Zakharova** said that **2,000 jihadi operatives were taking part in battles near the Aleppo Province** and that their actions violated the ceasefire in Syria (Sputnik, June 10, 2016). **Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov** called on the US to join Russia and take joint steps against those who violate the ceasefire in Syria (TASS News Agency, June 9, 2016).

Main developments in Syria



Map of Syria (www.nationsonline.org)

The SDF's attack on the city of Manbij

■ SDF troops who are near the city of Manbij **managed to take over several towns and villages in its vicinity and to encircle the city**. Tens of thousands of civilians

are trapped in the city. Manbij is reportedly without water and electricity due to the siege on the city (Ajel_Syria, Syrian Independent Twitter account, June 13, 2016)¹.

■ **SDF troops began attacking the city from its north side. They have reportedly taken over the international highway, thereby cutting off the highway connecting Manbij and Al-Bab (another ISIS stronghold west of the Euphrates River). ISIS, on its part, is waging guerilla warfare against the SDF forces. ISIS operatives detonated several car bombs east of Manbij and attacked Kurdish positions east of the Tishreen Dam.**

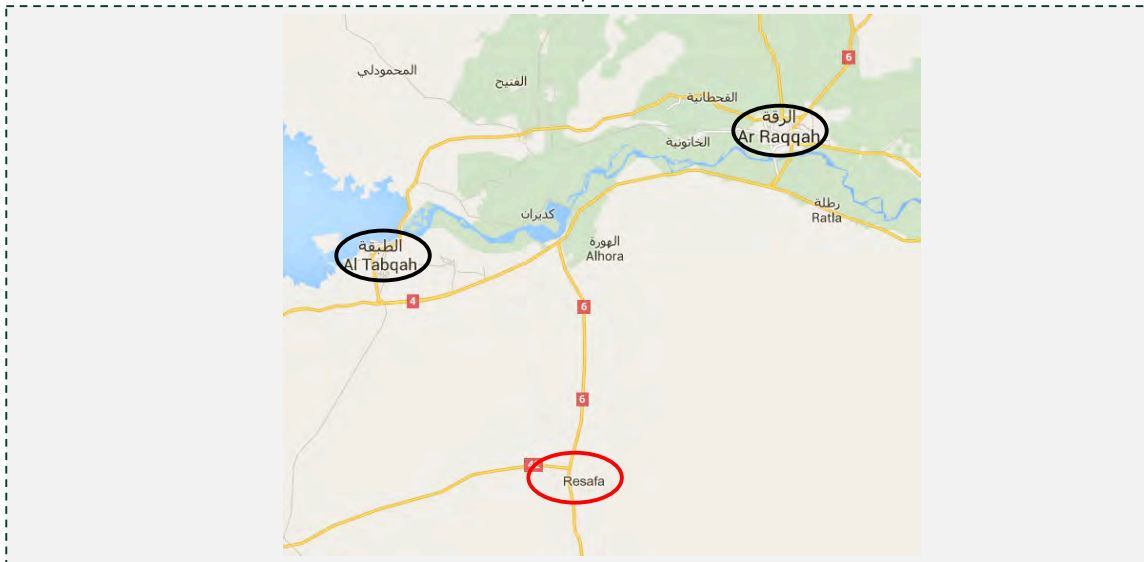


The cities of Manbij and Al-Bab, ISIS strongholds west of the Euphrates River (Google Maps)

Syrian Army attack on Al-Raqqah

■ **The Syrian Army continues to advance along the route leading to Tabqa. This week it took over the Al-Rasafeh junction, where the road to Tabqa and Al-Raqqah begins.**

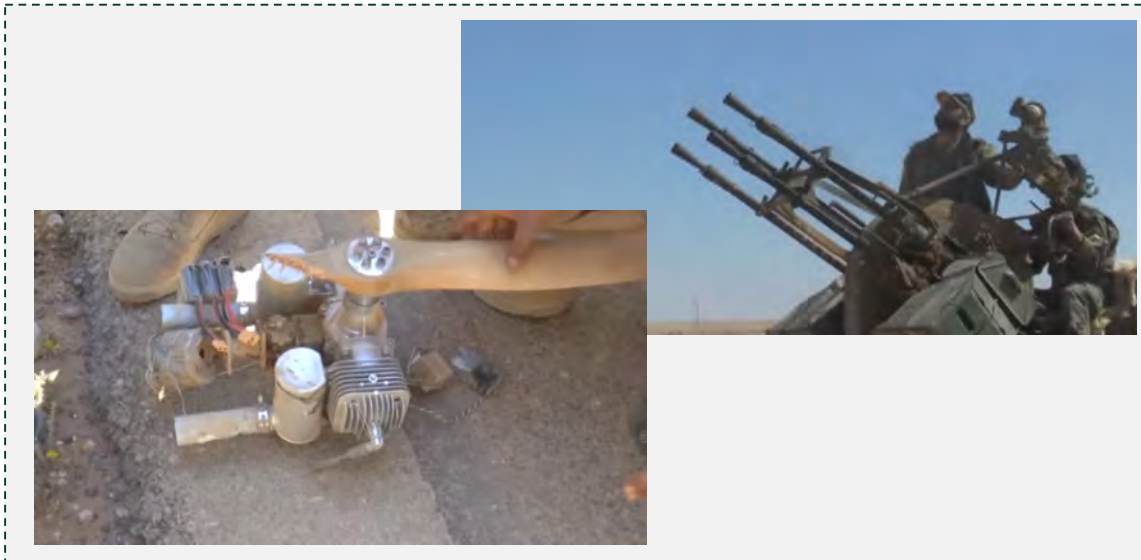
¹ The civilians trapped in the city reportedly include English and German operatives (Al-Quds Al-Arabi, June 13, 2016).



The Al-Rasafeh junction (Google Maps)



Syrian Army presence in the important Al-Rasafeh junction. On the side of the road (on the right) there is an ISIS sign that reads “There is No God but Allah - the Islamic State - Al-Raqqah Province” (SANA News Agency, June 12, 2016).



Video documenting the interception of an ISIS drone near the Al-Rasafeh junction. Right: Anti-aircraft fire directed at the drone. Left: The wreckage of the drone that was shot down (SANA, June 12, 2016)

The area of Damascus

■ In the area of the **shrine of Al-Sayyida Zaynab**, a Shiite holy place south of Damascus, there have been several deadly terrorist attacks. Dozens of people were injured in attacks, some of them civilians and others Syrian Army soldiers (Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, June 11, 2016). ISIS's Damascus Province claimed responsibility for the attacks. According to the statement, three suicide bombers carried out the attacks. Two of them blew themselves up with explosive belts and a third terrorist blew himself up triggering a car bomb (Aamaq, June 11, 2016).



Right: ISIS car bomb explosion on Al-Tin Street, at Al-Sayyida Zaynab. Left: The Al-Dhiabiya pedestrian crossing where the ISIS operative detonated his explosive belt (Syrian TV, June 11, 2016)

Southern Syria

■ According to an announcement by ISIS, the **Al-Yarmouk Martyrs Brigade**, the **Islamic Muthanna Movement** and **Jama'at Al-Mujahedin**, **three ISIS-affiliated rebel organizations, have decided to unite**. The three organizations operate in the Yarmouk Basin area, in the tri-border area of Syria, Jordan and Israel. The umbrella framework established by these organizations is called the **Khalid Ibn al-Walid Army** (Amaq, June 10, 2016). According to Syrian media reports, the three organizations joined forces in the second half of May 2016. The new network is headed by **Abu Othman al-Shami**, aka **Abu Othman al-Idlibi** (Enab Baladi, May 25, 2016; all4syria, June 10, 2016; thenational.ae, June 12, 2016).

■ **The US Department of State announced that the Al-Yarmouk Martyrs Brigade has been designated as a global terrorist entity**. According to the announcement, the Al-Yarmouk Martyrs Brigade, which was formed in August 2012 in Daraa, carried out attacks in southern Syria, particularly along the borders with Israel and Jordan. Inter alia, this organization abducted United Nations personnel working in the area. In 2014, the organization operated closely with the Al-Nusra Front, but then pledged allegiance to ISIS (US Department of State website, June 9, 2016).

Main developments in Iraq



Map of Iraq (www.nationsonline.org)

The campaign to take over the city of Fallujah (Updated to June 15, 2016)

- **Iraqi Army forces continue their efforts to liberate the city of Fallujah.** Over the past few days, **several of the city's southern neighborhoods have been cleansed.** Iraqi Army forces have taken control of most of the **Al-Shuhadaa' neighborhood (Al-Nashra, June 12, 2016).** The fighting is now concentrated **in the industrial area north of the neighborhood.** According to a report from June 11, 2016, **ISIS unexpectedly withdrew from western Fallujah and the Iraqi forces managed to liberate a number of areas west of the city. ISIS, on its part, continues its guerrilla operations northwest of Fallujah and in the combat zones to the south of the city.**
- According to reports by Iraqi sources, the Iraqi Army managed to create a safe route for civilians leaving the city. ISIS operatives are reportedly attempting to flee

along with the civilians. According to government sources in the Al-Anbar Province, so far 580 suspected ISIS operatives were arrested while attempting to flee the city among the thousands of refugees who fled. There are also (unconfirmed) reports that the Shiite militias that support the Iraqi Army in the fighting against ISIS massacred dozens of civilians who fled from the city (Al-Hurra, June 13, 2016; Al-Sharq Al-Awsat, June 14, 2016).

The city of Baghdad and its environs

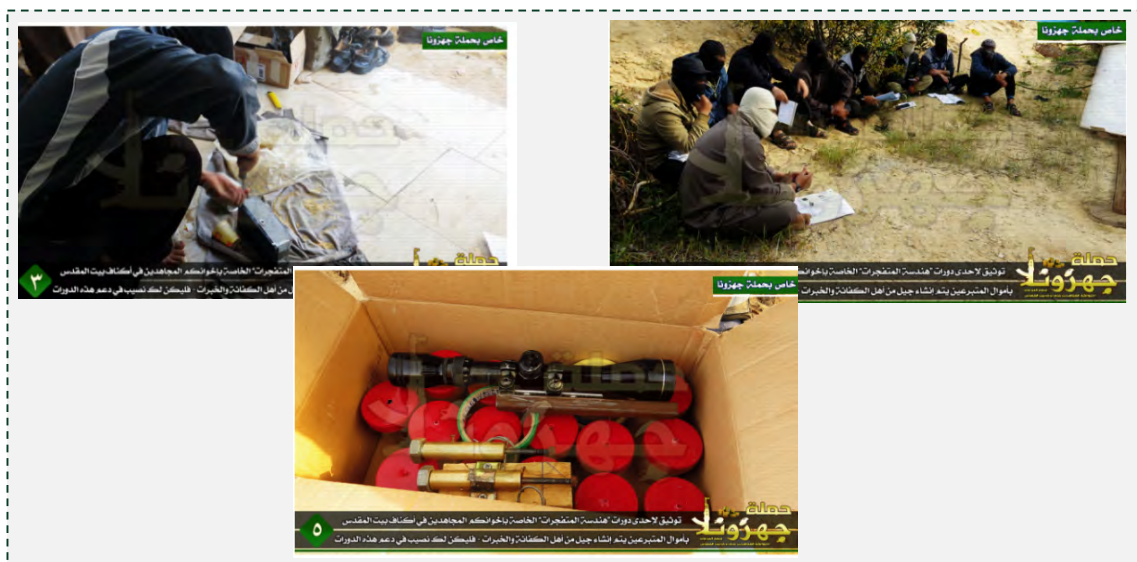
■ **ISIS continues to carry out acts of terrorism and guerrilla warfare in the city of Baghdad and its environs.** Six people were reportedly killed and 30 others wounded in a car bomb explosion in the new area of Baghdad (Sky News, June 9, 2016). Another attack was carried out near the Al-Bayda' movie theater. ISIS claimed responsibility for both attacks.



Suicide bomber codenamed Habib al-Iraqi, who carried out a suicide bombing attack in Baghdad with an explosive belt (Haqq, June 10, 2016)

Palestinians and Israeli Arabs

■ An organization calling itself the Environs of Jerusalem (a Palestinian Salafist-jihadi network operating in the Gaza Strip) has **posted a video in Gaza**. The video shows network operatives explaining how to make explosive vests and IEDs. They claim to have purchased the materials with donations and say that the video's purpose is to train "a generation of experts." The video calls on young Palestinians to participate in the courses and to share the information about them.



Photos from the video on how to make IEDs, issued by the Environs of Jerusalem in the Gaza Strip (Haqq, June 10, 2016)

Two Gazans killed in airstrikes in Syria

■ Reports were recently received of the deaths of two more Palestinians from the Gaza Strip fighting in the ranks of ISIS:

- Palestinian news sites reported the death of **Khaled Salman Ahmed al-Tarabin**, aka **Jaafar al-Tayyar**, in a coalition airstrike against ISIS targets in Syria. He came from the Al-Maghazi refugee camp in the central Gaza Strip. He left the Gaza Strip and went to Syria to fight in the ranks of ISIS (Facebook page of News of the Al-Maghazi refugee camp, Ma'an News Agency, June 11 and 13, 2016).
- The Ibn Taymiyyah Center, which is affiliated with Salafist-jihadi elements in the Gaza Strip, issued a death notice for **Muhammad Saber al-Masri**, aka **Abu Abdallah al-Masri**. He came from Nuseirat in the central Gaza Strip. He was killed on June 13, 2016, in an airstrike in the Al-Raqqah Province in Syria, while fighting in the ranks of ISIS (Twitter account of the Ibn Taymiyyah Center, June 13, 2016).



Right: Khaled Salman Ahmed al-Tarabin (Facebook page of News of the Al-Maghazi refugee camp and Ma'an News Agency, June 11, 2016). Left: The death notice issued by the Ibn Taymiyyah Center for Muhammad Saber al-Masri (The Ibn Taymiyyah Media Center's Twitter page, June 13, 2016)

The global jihad in other countries

Libya

The campaign over Sirte

■ The forces loyal to the Government of National Accord, led by the Libyan Dawn militias, **continue to tighten the siege on the city of Sirte**. During the week, they took over several other locations around the city and reached its suburbs, where fighting is now underway. According to the information center of the campaign, **within a month ISIS lost 9,900 km² of the area under its control, and it now controls just 20 km² in Sirte itself** (Twitter account of the information center of the campaign over Sirte, June 11, 2016).

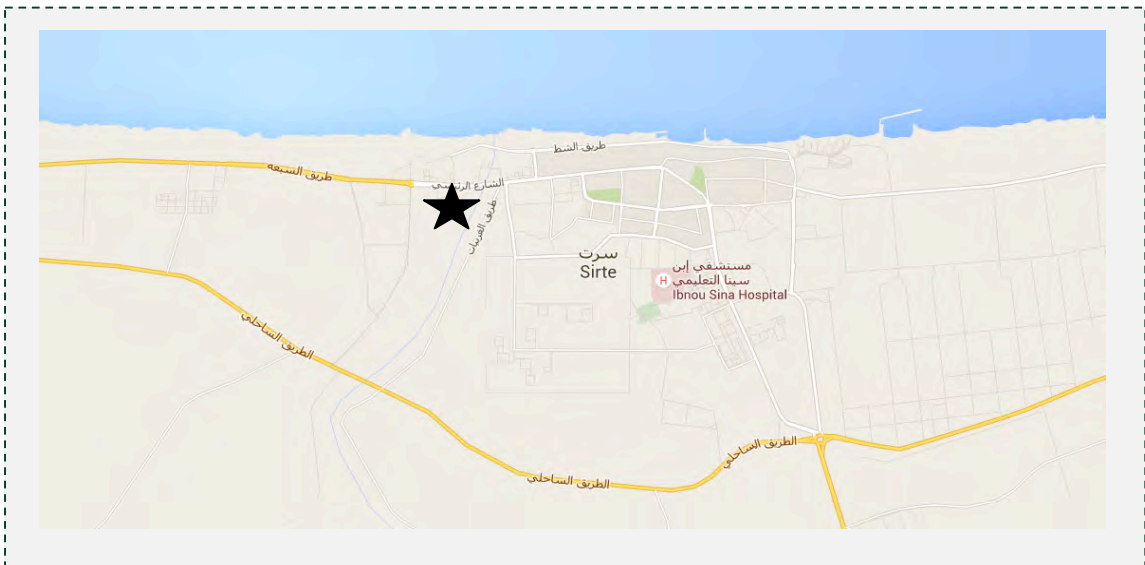
■ Inter alia, **the attacking forces took over the port of Sirte**, as well as the coastal area to the east of the port. An ISIS force also attacked the port of Sirte in an attempt to retake it, but the attack was repulsed (aljazeera.net, June 12, 2016). According to reports by the attacking forces, **they are working to open the coastal road linking Sirte and Harawah**, which has been liberated from the hands of ISIS by the Petroleum Facilities Guard. **The advance by the forces was halted on June 12-13, 2016, when they reached the outskirts of the city's residential areas**. They are fighting there against ISIS operatives who have barricaded themselves inside **buildings** and are fighting with IEDs and snipers positioned on rooftops.

■ **ISIS (as usual) responded with guerrilla warfare against the attacking forces**. On June 12, 2016, its operatives carried out three suicide bombing attacks: a car

bomb exploded in a field hospital of the attacking forces (about 50 km west of Sirte). Two other cars exploded against concentrations of forces in the south and west of the city. A few more attempted suicide bombing attacks were foiled (aljazeera.net, June 12, 2016; alarabiya.net, June 13, 2016; Al-Arabi al-Jadeed, June 12, 2016).



ISIS scaffold being toppled in the in Al-Zafran neighborhood on the outskirts of Sirte after being taken over by the attacking forces (Facebook, June 8, 2016)



The Al-Zafran neighborhood in western Sirte (marked with a black star), which the attacking forces have reached (Google Maps)

The Philippines

■ The Aamaq News Agency, ISIS’s media foundation, **published an infographic describing the actions carried out by its operatives in the Philippines** (similar to publications released by its other provinces). The infographic indicates that **10 jihadi groups operate in various areas in the Philippines**. The groups have pledged

allegiance to ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. According to the infographic, 289 members of the security forces in the Philippines have been killed by ISIS since April 2015 (Isdarat al-Dawla al-Islamiyya, June 12, 2016).

Kazakhstan

- On June 5, 2016, around 20 militants carried out **a series of attacks against a National Guard camp and against two stores selling weapons in the city of Aktobe** (about 1,000 km west of the capital of Kazakhstan). These attacks killed at least 20 people. Five Islamic militants suspected of involvement in these attacks were killed in an exchange of gunfire with the Kazakh Special Forces on June 10, 2016 (Reuters, June 10, 2016).
- According to **Kazakh Interior Minister Kalmukhanbet Kassymov**, preliminary information indicates that **the terrorists received instructions to carry out the attack “from an element in Syria”** (Sputnik, June 14, 2016). According to the Kazakh authorities, one of those responsible for the attacks is **Rustem Omarov, 26, who posted a video expressing admiration for ISIS** (Reuters, June 8, 2016). **Around 300 Kazakhs have gone to Syria and Iraq to join the ranks of jihadi organizations, mainly ISIS.** Half of them are fighters and the rest are members of their families. The Kazakh authorities estimate that approximately 15,000 Salafist Muslims now live in Kazakhstan (Reuters, June 10, 2016).